

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 011409

FOLLOWING TEL SENT ACTION SECSTATE INFO DAMASCUS, SEOUL FROM
AMMAN JAN 12:

QUOTE C O N F I D E N T I A L AMMAN 0153

DQMO. 11652 GDS

TAGS: PFOR SY KS

SUBJECT: SOUTH KOREAN INTEREST IN RELATIONS WITH SYRIA AND IRAQ

1.SOUTH KOREAN AMBASSADOR TO JORDAN SANG YUNG SOH
TOLD ME JANUARY 10 HE JUST PAID A "VACATION" VISIT TO
SYRIA AND IRAQ. HE HAD HAD NO TROUBLE OBTAINING VISAS
TO VISIT BOTH COUNTRIES. IN SYRIA HE SAID HE WAS
EXTREMELY WELL RECEIVED BY PEOPLE, AND WAS IMPRESSED
BY THE GREAT PERSONAL FRIENDLINESS TOWARD HIM AND HIS
FAMILY OF ORDINARY SYRIANS--A DEVELOPMENT HE HAD NOT
ANTICIPATED.

2. HE SAID FURTHER THAT HE HAPPENED ON A CHANCE MEETING
WITH THE BROTHER OF SYRIAN DEFENSE MINISTER, MUSTAFA
TLASS IN A DAMASCUS SHOP. THE BROTHER, A PRIVATE
CONTRACTOR ABDUL KADR TLASS, INVITED AMBASSADOR SOH AND
FAMILY TO A PERSONAL LUNCHEON IN A VILLAGE NEAR HOMS.
SOH INQUIRED ABOUT SYRIAN PERCEPTIONS OF SOUTH KOREA
TLASS WAS SO GENUINELY INTERESTED THAT SOH ASKED HIM TO
CONVEY TO HIS BROTHER SOUTH KOREA'S INTEREST IN ESTABLISHING
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DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH SYRIA. SOH HAS NO INDICATION OF

HOW THIS APPROACH WILL BE RECEIVED BUT KNOWS OF THE CONSIDERABLE NORTH KOREAN PRESENCE IN DAMASCUS AND PYONGYANG'S CONSIDERABLE LEVERAGE. HE ALSO TOLD ME THAT THE NORTH KOREAN AMBASSADOR IN DAMASCUS IS SEEKING DUAL ACCREDITATION IN AMMAN WHERE THEY HAVE AN EMBASSY AND A CHARGE, BUT THUS FAR IT HAS BEEN RESISTED IN THE THE FOREIGN MINISTRY. PRIME MINISTER RIFAI TOLD ME THE SAE THING SOME WEEKS AGO.

3. IN IRAQ CONDITIONS WERE MUCH DIFFERENT. HE MET NO OFFICIALS. PEOPLE WERE RESERVED, APPEARED HARRASSED AND GENERALLY UNFRIENDLY. HE SAID SOUTH KOREA WOULD EVENTUALLY LIKE TO OPEN RELATIONS WITH IRAQ ALSO BUT WS NOT BREAKING ITS NECK TO DO SO.

4. WOULD APPRECIATE ANY COMMENT EMBASSY DAMASCUS MIGHT HAVE, ESPECIALLY ON STRENGTH OF NORTH KOREAN SYRIAN RELATIONS AND POSSIBILITIES OF SYRIAN RECEPTIVITY TO APPROACH TO PASS ON TO AMBASSADOR SOH HERE. PICKERING UNQUOTE KISSINGER

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